

alba, Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopica* and African Spoonbills *Platalea alba*. In one nest there were no less than four Great White Egret nestlings, whereas the Spoonbills had only one or two young.

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Blue-eared Glossy Starlings *Lamprotornis chalybaeus* and Wattled Starlings *Creatophora cinerea* associating with livestock

On 23 August 1989 at around 15:00 hrs we watched Blue-eared Glossy Starlings *Lamprotornis chalybaeus* and Wattled Starlings *Creatophora cinerea* associating with a large flock of sheep and goats grazing near the rocky gorge of the Kisaju River on the Kitengela Plains near Nairobi (1° 35S, 36° 48E). Both species, but mainly *L. chalybaeus*, perched freely on the backs of sheep as they moved along, and flew down to pick up food items on the ground. Others collected insects as they walked behind sheep or goats. Both species were seen to pick off ectoparasites from the ears and foreheads of sheep, balancing carefully as they did so. Birds stayed on the sheep for only short periods (up to about 30 s) at a time. They were not seen to perch on the goats, whose short slippery coats may have been more difficult to balance on than the tangled fleece of the sheep.

In their review of bird-mammal associations in Africa, Dean & Macdonald (1981) reported that Wattled Starlings in southern Africa commonly perch on various mammals, including sheep. However, they had no records of this species gleaning ectoparasites. The Cape Glossy Starling *L. nitens* regularly perches on mammals and gleans from them (Dean & Macdonald 1981), but neither behaviour appears to have been reported before for the closely related Blue-eared Glossy Starling. In these species such behaviour is evidently facultative and opportunistic, and, as Dean & Macdonald (1981) suggest, may have formed an intermediate stage in the evolution of the obligate ectoparasite-gleaning of the oxpeckers *Buphagus* spp. On this occasion large numbers of both Wattled and Blue-eared Glossy Starlings were already in the area: several fig trees in the gorge were in heavy fruit, and they had been seen feeding there earlier in the day.

Reference

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Streaky-breasted Pygmy Crakes *Sarothrura boehmi* in Nairobi National Park

On 2 May 1988 a *Sarothrura* was heard calling from an area of recently inundated grassland in Nairobi National Park; it was recognized immediately as *S. boehmi*. Later a tape recording of *S. boehmi* was played at the site and after some 45–50 min an adult male was observed standing at the roadside some 2 m from the tape recorder. It remained motionless for some 30 s before jumping back into the long grass. Later in the week up to four calling birds were located in this inundated area of about 4 ha. More calling birds were then discovered at two flooded sites about a kilometre from the first area, with up to four individuals at one of these new sites and a single bird at the other.

Although the sites were visited on an almost daily basis for the next two weeks, no further views other than glimpses of individual birds making short flights in the tall grassland were obtained, and no calling was noted after 26 May.

The Streaky-breasted Pygmy Crake is a rare intra-African migrant from the southern tropics with very few records from Kenya. Jackson (1938) gives details of two early records from Nairobi in May 1905 and mentions others from Machakos, Kisumu and Trans-Nzoia. The only recent record is of a female (all blackish in colour) flushed by a dog from flooded grassland alongside the perimeter fence of the Nairobi National Park on 8 June 1980 (Fleur Ng'weno in East African Bird Report 1980, *Scopus* 4: 106). Since then there were annual occurrences from 1982–85 of migrating birds caught and ringed in May at Mufindi in southern Tanzania (Baker, *et al.* 1984). These were birds presumably moving north from their breeding grounds in Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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